



## Council for Education in the Commonwealth

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### **Global Education Strategy Proposed by the Department of Education (formerly DCSF) and the Department for International Development.**

1 The Council for Education in the Commonwealth (CEC) welcomes the Global Education Strategy, appreciates the decision to invite public consultation, supports the principles set out for the education of British young people and wishes to endorse the comments submitted by the Development Education Association (DEA).

2 CEC would also like to add a comment about the Commonwealth. For the following reasons, the Council finds it unfortunate that the consultation document fails to mention the Commonwealth of Nations as an element of the global scene with which all British young people should be acquainted.

3 In the first place, in terms of *current affairs* and of immediate relevance, the relatively peaceful and amicable evolution of the Commonwealth helps explain the current diverse composition of Britain's population and the discussions to which it gives rise. (It has been claimed that two thirds of the people in Britain have a relative in another Commonwealth country no more distant than 2<sup>nd</sup> cousin).

4 The Commonwealth adds another dimension to our understanding of the world and helps to negotiate multiple identities and overlapping political, social and economic levels of belonging. It could help British students and students in partner schools abroad to grow up with a mature attitude to local, regional, national (English/Welsh/Scottish/ Irish), UK, European, Commonwealth and global identities and build on their synergies.

5 Including the Commonwealth in the national curriculum would also help explain recurring contemporary events with high media profiles such as the Commonwealth Games and Commonwealth Writers' Prize.

6 In terms of human *history* and evolution, the Commonwealth is an extraordinary example of how relations of military and violent civil dominance can be guided and negotiated into relations of equality, amity, shared values, exchange and cooperation. Given the huge differences between member countries in geographical area, size of population, levels of social, educational, political and economic development and international influence, the aspect of 'equality' carries particular educational value.

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7 The fact that the membership includes republics that have voluntarily recognised the British monarch as Head of the Commonwealth, as well as many independent states that have of their own accord chosen the British monarch as their Head of State, underlines the extraordinariness of the evolution –and the value of studying how it was managed.

8 In terms of *political* values and influence, the Commonwealth Ministers Action Group is an example of how states can agree to influence each other peaceably in reinforcing adherence to common principles and procedures, such as the Harare principles of democracy. The adherence of countries like Mozambique and Rwanda underlines the wider acknowledgement of the political value of the Commonwealth. In contemporary terms, the Commonwealth acts as a force for good in promoting the rights of people to have a say in how they are governed, no matter how large their country or complex their political and economic systems. Additionally, the regular meetings of Heads of Government and of Ministers of Education, Finance, Women’s Affairs, Youth and so on serve both to consolidate values and to stimulate innovation in political thinking and procedures.

9 The consultation paper mentions the role of civil society -NGOs/CSOs- in items 4.6, 4.19 and elsewhere. In the UK there are a good number of CSOs that focus on aspects of the Commonwealth that address global issues: the newly formed Department of Education and DfID could facilitate their acting as resources in developing the curriculum and in enriching the programmes of schools.

10 More broadly, the Commonwealth Foundation has launched a very useful book and CD, “*Commonground: a practical guide to the Commonwealth*”, which the strategy document could list as an easily available resource on the Internet at <http://www.commonwealthfoundation.com/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=oSSIkTcrrQg%3d&tabid=326> >.

11 In parallel, the functioning of civil society on a pan-Commonwealth level through organisations like the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Commonwealth Association for Science, Technical and Mathematics Education or Commonwealth Consortium for Education, furnishes material to study the informal contending influences that characterise the politics within and between democratic societies.

12 The role of the *commonalities of language, law and governance* in perpetuating this association of 54 very different countries is surely worth A-level study.

13 In *economics*, the Commonwealth offers material to study and against which to test theories of economic dynamics –trade, exploration, prospecting- and the political and military decisions to which they give rise, the evolution of trading and pricing arrangements.

14 In *geography and environmental studies*, the Commonwealth with its globe-girdling membership on every continent, in every belt of climate –Canada and the Arctic, Kenya, Uganda, Malaysia, Singapore and Kiribati on the equator, New Zealand by the Antarctic- with every kind of topography offers limitless scope for studies, not to mention biodiversity and the threats to it from climate change.

15 The paragraphs above make it clear that the argument for including the Commonwealth as part of an integrated curriculum for “Global Education” is powerful on many counts. The Council for Education in the Commonwealth hopes that the DoE and DfID will give the Commonwealth proper weight in their final strategy to produce globally minded British citizens.

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